MICHIGAN'S PUBLIC SAFETY COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM

July 2012
Volume 4, Issue 3

MPSCS Newsletter

Interoperable Communications Help Fight Wildfires

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Did you know?

The MPSCS now has over 61,100 radios on the system.

Northern Michigan witnessed the devastating effects of wildfire season this year as several significant fires swept through northern parts of the state which burned more than 35,000 acres. Dry and windy weather during the months of April through May provide threatening conditions for Michigan forests every year. This year MPSCS was further prepared to aid in interoperable communications for the Duck Lake, Pine Creek and Mio Fires with staff members having attended Communication Technician training in recent months. (see pg. IV for details)

Duck Lake Wildfire - Photo Courtesy MI Department of Natural Resources

Crews battled to contain the Pine Lake and Duck Lake Wildfire in the Upper Peninsula's Luce County. The fire had burned more than 21,000 acres, and on May 25, 2012 Gov. Rick Snyder declared a state of disaster in Luce and Schoolcraft counties. By June 11th, 2012 the fire had been mostly contained.

Multiple agencies joined together for a coordinated response, including: Michigan Department of Natural Resources, U.S. Forest Service, Michigan National Guard, Michigan State Police and Emergency Management, Keweenaw Bay Indian Community, Luce County Sheriff, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, American Red Cross, Salvation Army, volunteer firefighters, and the Upper Peninsula Commission for Area Progress or UPCAP (211). In addition, the Michigan's Public Safety Communications System was able to assist with interoperable communication efforts.

The Communication-on-Wheels (COW) was first deployed to Schoolcraft County on behalf of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, and then redeployed to Newberry for the Duck Lake fire. MPSCS personnel and equipment were deployed, including portable radios, antennas, clips, and bank chargers. MPSCS staff attended meetings every morning to answer questions and to take care of any repairs requested.

Joe Wassa, the local MPSCS Radio Tech, and designated Communications Technician for the incident, was assigned to support communication needs including programming radios brought in from across the nation by firefighters, and managing the state communication assets. Radio Techs and Steeplejacks from the Superior and Northern region shops also assisted to ensure communications between different agencies were seamless and uninterrupted.

Besides using Mutal Aid (MA) and Talk Around (TA) channels set up at the surrounding towers, 8 separate Event Talkgroups were assigned to cover both events at different times. As of May 31st there were 112,487 Push-To-Talks on these 8 event Talkgroups. ***(cont'd on Pg. VI)***

Words From Our Director: Brad Stoddard

Collaboration and Partnership

Bradley Stoddard

Government services have witnessed growth based on demand and more often than not, expand based on technology advancements. Collaboration and sharing have long been in place for government entities. For the most part working together continued behind the scenes as the value was identified to share communications, infrastructure, and staff — all based on common sense.

There are a greater number of technology solutions that maximize taxpayer benefit, while minimizing parallel costs amounting to tax dollar savings. The nation has seen the most recent examples relating to the Public Safety Broadband Network and Next Generation 911. There has been a greater investment of time relating to the policy than there may have been defining the standards and subsequent technology solution to develop the related parallel solutions.

"I am from the State, and I am here to partner. How can I help you meet your goals?"

Michigan has been involved in the Next Gen 911 planning stage for the past two years. In some regional areas we have invested a great deal of effort and time developing regional approaches that makes the greatest taxpayer investment for the communities served. Examples that demonstrate the fundamental approach of partnering to benefit the taxpayers into collaborative solutions could be partnering dispatch consoles for one 911 center as a backup or a partner 911 center geographically separated by the Great Lakes.

ESInets will be the backbone of connected Next Gen 911 centers, and many 911 centers around the state of Michigan have been building the foundational regional partnerships for years. Those trusted relationships across public safety will continue to see the adoption via partnering in areas where in the past there would be no thought of such partnering based on strained relationships during that time.

For decades the path has been forged for government leaders to find the common sense approach of working together, finding ways to collaborate, and making decisions in the best interest of the taxpayers. There may never be the "one size fits all" approach for all technology utilization for agencies to partner or collaborate, but we should at least take the time to review and ask questions. The idea that may initially be approached as "out-of-the-box" could turn into the valued opportunity to leverage prior investments in areas that may not have been considered initially.

We will continue to witness collaboration opportunities and will require such approaches to get to the next generation of communications approaches. Such examples would be leveraging fiber owned by education or transportation. That should be the first look for connecting Next Gen 911 and Public Safety Broadband Networks to minimize or neutralize taxpayer expenditures.

From the taxpayers view, government is just government. They rarely separate where their respective tax dollars had gone to fund, but they expect that on their behalf their money will be spent wisely. Before we see the convergence in the technologies of Next Gen 911 and Public Safety Broadband Networks, we will witness the convergence of partners on that scale and with the level of trust that will develop the path of success for Michigan. If you hadn't heard it from myself or any of my staff to date — I am from the State, and I am here to partner. How can I help you meet your goals?

Local Integrations and Project Updates

Chippewa Co. - Sugar Island went live

Lapeer Co. - 6 Site Simulcast in progress, go live October

City of Flint - integrate consoles into system and add channels

Oakland Co. - installing MC7500's to integrate, go live July

Genesee Co. - upgrade consoles and add channels

Marquette - will be installing MC7500's

The City of Livonia *came on the system in 2012. The Public Service Division were using EF Johnson radios and having trouble with interference. While the MPSCS began tracking the problem, the City of Livonia were given loaner radios, and we let them program in their own templates until the problem was resolved. Lt. Gregory Winn said that "the MPSCS was there to assist us and resolve any issues that arose during the transition."*

Power Outages and Generator Back Up

Over the week of July 4th there were 107 power outage events due to storm activity reported to the MPSCS across the state. Generators at certain locations ran for a total of 245 hours to supply uninterrupted power to the radio system. Due to the built in resiliency of the MPSCS system, interoperable communication remained intact for the remainder of the outages.

800 MHz Rebanding Update

The past few months have seen a dramatic up tick in the activity surrounding our efforts to begin the actual 800 MHz Rebanding of radios. As previously described, MPSCS has created a Back-to-Back (B2B) repeater system that receives/transmits both the old and new Mutual Aid (MA) frequencies. This ensures that these emergency and tactical channels are accessible by the entire radio system before, during and after individual radios have been Rebanded. The last of the issues of duplicate and "blocking" frequencies have now been removed. The B2B will be installed on the last dozen antenna sites (of 176 in total on the MA system) tentatively by July 30, 2012.

MPSCS has, along with its contractor RCC, began contacting every agency in the 23 mid-Michigan counties comprising Area #1 (http://www.rccpm.com/MI800MHz/default) to identify the person that will be the contact for Rebanding. The RCC scheduler has assembled their contact information, addresses, phone and e-mail information into a scheduling database. In turn, users have been provided with a list of the radios that MPSCS shows are in our inventory for them. ***(cont'd on Pg. VI)***

Communications Technician (COMT)Training

Staff members at MPSCS and supporting agencies received All-Hazards Communication Technician (COMT) training courtesy of instructors Tim Lenk and Gary Parker of the DHS Office of Emergency Communications/ Interoperable Communications Technical Assistance Program (OEC/ICTA). The week long training course took place from April 30th to May 4th at the Collins Rd. location. COMT is an All-Hazards Communication Technician course designed to train emergency responders in the procedures of disaster operations common to radio communication.

Members from MPSCS staff who attended the training were Toney Casey, Joseph Krenke, James Mileski, Rich Melbow, Randy Williams, and Jerry Nummer. Other agency partners who attended included Douglas Sitterson of DTMB, Bernard Alexander of Detroit EMD, Steven Stryd of Kalamazoo County Sheriff's Department, and Shanon Herron of Wayne County EMD.

The class was led by FEMA certified trainers Tim Lenk and Gary Parker, and assisted by MPSCS employee Mike McCarty. Lenk has ample experience as a Communications Specialist and Leader. He has been deployed nationally to the North Ridge Earthquake in 1994, the Atlanta Summer Olympics in 1996, to the World Trade Center in 2001, and to many hurricane locations including Katrina in 2005. The techniques that were taught came from skills practiced and acquired in these and other high priority communication situations.

The training included both classroom time and practical training exercises that were designed to fulfill the goals

Tim Lenk and Gary Parker posing with participants from the COMT training course

of the course. According to Lenk those goals are: to be prepared to arrive on an all-hazards scene with the proper equipment, ready to gather information, access the area and begin planning; identify basic components and theories behind successful establishment and operation of radio, telephone, data networks, and satellites supporting an incident; to learn incident scene safety and mitigation strategies; know the basic installation and maintenance of incident communication systems; and understand how to maintain accountability of assigned communications equipment

One of the hands-on exercises, nicknamed "The Big One," was supposed to simulate an earthquake that had formed a mountain range and caused all communications to go down. The objectives were to have a command tent set up and conduct radio testing to make sure everyone involved could report to command. The team set up the Communication on Wheels (COW) to initiate mobile command and to carry out the goals of the exercise.

Toney Casey, MPSCS Support Services Manager, has been through similar training before but said that this was "an eye opening experience into how the National Incident Management System (NIMS) works, it gave me the chance to see how different people from several agencies across the state would work together ."

Steeplejacks and Lansing Fire Department Team Up For Training

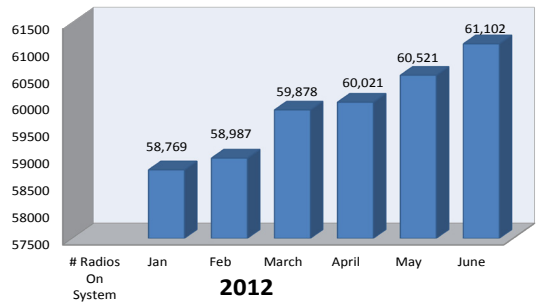
Steeplejacks from Michigan's Public Safety Communications System joined the Lansing Fire Department for training in tower rescue and equipment techniques at locations in Lansing and Gaylord.

MPSCS staff members who went through the training included: from Lansing Eric Gibbs and Rodney Anway; from Rockford Darren Robinson, Kevin Williams and Joe Zerlaut; from Gaylord, Kole Sacker and Verdier Wekwert; and from Gwinn Doug Rindels.

April 3rd, Lansing Fire rescue teamed up with MPSCS steeplejacks to familiarize themselves with the different equipment available to use in the event of a rescue. Joe Zerlaut, Steeplejack Supervisor, stated "Both parties came away from the meeting gaining new procedures and knowledge of equipment for rescuing anyone from one of our towers."

On the second day of training, May 16th, the group went through tower training and rescue at a site in Gaylord. Dan Morgan, Safety Analyst for the Department of Technology Management and Budget, taught First Aid, chainsaw safety, as well as tower climbing and rescue techniques. The Lansing Fire Department supplied a 200 lb. dummy for rescue training purposes. The crew was able to simulate a real suspension rescue and practice their new skills. On this day 8 MPSCS employees were also certified in Automated External Defibrillator (AED) and Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).

In preparation for further tower rescue efficiency, the Lansing Fire Department has been working to support the MPSCS in establishing an agreement with Michigan State police to use a helicopter in the event of an emergency at a remote tower site. Thank you to Lansing Fire Department and MSP for better preparing and supporting our trained steeplejacks for on-site safety.



Check out our website and let us know what you would like to see.
www.michigan.gov/mpscs

Wildfire (cont'd)

Earlier in April 2012, MPSCS crews assisted in another fire that seared across the Huron National Forest of South Mio, MI damaging an estimated 14,000 acres.

A request was sent into the MPSCS from the U.S. Forest Service for additional radios to aid in communication for first responders. Within 30 minutes of the initial request, radios were dispatched from the MPSCS Gaylord shop and sent to the disaster location. Bob Olson from the Gaylord radio shop delivered 24 confirmed working radios and chargers to the scene. After deployment procedures were completed the U.S. Forest Services did not have anyone available to set up communications, so Olson stayed and helped in the process. The Mio fire was completely contained by April 26th.

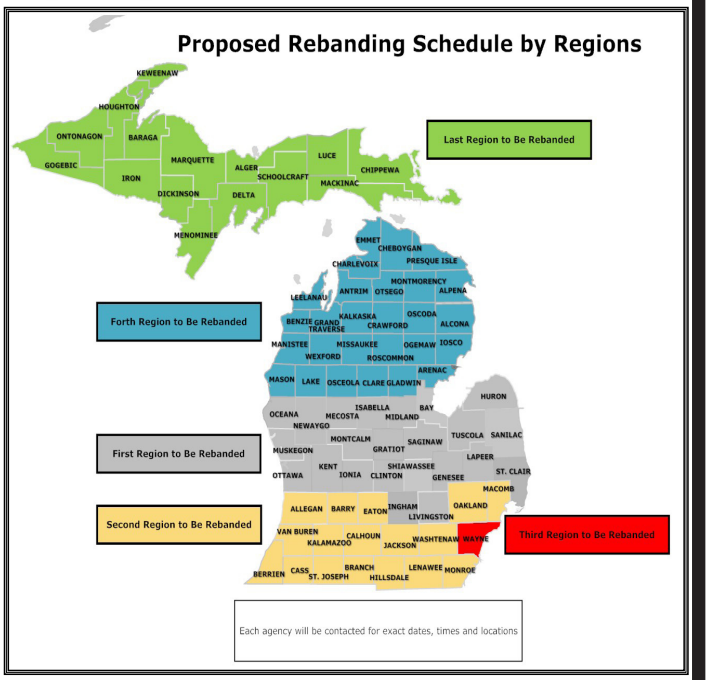
The efforts of many agencies throughout Michigan, including MPSCS, have succeeded in containing these large-scale fires and some are still working hard to assess and repair damage caused by the fires.

800 MHz Rebanding Update (cont'd)

The scheduler will contact them again to arrange for a specific date (and time frame in some cases) for their radios to be Rebanded. Upon agreement on a date, agencies will be provided with an information packet describing the Rebanding process at the sites and what to expect when your radios are being Rebanded. It will also include a form to be completed to set up the process for obtaining the "$50 Reward" for each radio once all of your agency's inventory has been Rebanded.

In most counties, two Rebanding sites will be setup at or nearby the highest concentration of Motorola radios. Agencies will be expected to bring their radios, portable as well as mobile, to those sites for Rebanding. The sites will have teams of 4-10 trained, experienced technicians to Reband your radios quickly and correctly. While the Rebanding reprogramming takes 20-40 minutes, the large team of techs can Reband multiple radios simultaneously, so high throughput is expected. Please bring your spare radios (if any) in the first group of radios, so as to fill holes as other radios are Rebanded.

Radios cannot always be easily moved for either safety or logistical reasons. Rebanding Vans with a single tech will be dispatched to Reband radios meeting certain criteria at their permanent location. Examples include control stations and consoles, heavy construction equipment, planes, fire apparatus in some instances,



and other similarly situated equipment. The Scheduler will work with you to identify an and schedule these situations.

Radio Rebanding is now scheduled to start in the Ingham, Eaton, Clinton county area about August 22, and after this initial trial move out to the rest of Area #1. Area #1 is expected to be completed in October, before moving into Area #2.

MICHIGAN'S PUBLIC SAFETY COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM

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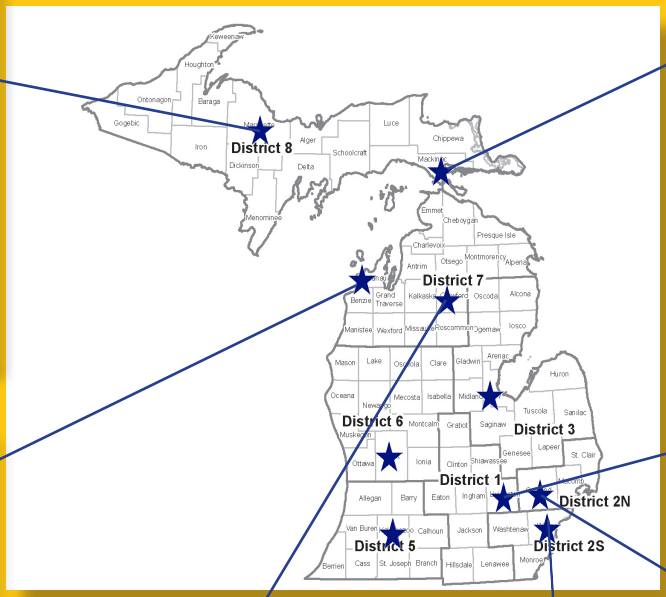
MPSCS USER GROUP MEETINGS

What are we doing right and what could we improve?
Do you have technical or billing questions?
How is our customer service?
Do we communicate the impact of upgrades well?
Join us for a Rebanding Update with detailed information for your agency.

Tentative Locations and Dates for 2012

NEXT
Marquette
Thursday
August 2, 2012
Whalstrom's Restaurant
5043 US Hwy 41 S
Harvey, MI 49855
1:00 pm - 3:00 pm



St. Ignace - TBA

Howell
Livingston Co.
911 Central Dispatch
300 S. Highlander Way
August 15, 2012
10:00 - 12:00 pm

Sleeping Bear Sand Dunes
9922 Front St.
Empire, MI
September 14, 2012
10:00 am - 12:00
www.nps.gov/slbe

Mt. Clemens - TBA

Gaylord - TBA

City of Livonia - TBA